

District 25 News

MAKIKI, TANTALUS, MCCULLY, PAPA KOLEA

June 2007



Dear Neighbors,

June brings the end of school, the start of summer, and countless graduation parties to celebrate the achievements of our children.

Education Matters. The 2007 Legislature placed a high priority on education and demonstrated its commitment to our students by appropriating \$190 million, or 28% of the projected \$700 million surplus, to the Department of Education to help fund new projects and alleviate the backlog of maintenance and repair at schools statewide.

The Legislature also continued to make strides in improving education by addressing curriculum development, teacher retention, and access to higher education. Please read this newsletter for some of the important education bills passed by the Legislature, including support for science and engineering education and improved charter school governance.

Got Email? One of my goals is to maintain communication through this newsletter with as many constituents as possible to help inform my decision-making process, as well as inform you about important legislative activity. Unfortunately, I am unable to mail newsletters to every resident in the District. One way to reduce costs is to email newsletters. If you would like to receive this newsletter by email, please email me at repbelatti@capitol.hawaii.gov.

Possible Override Session. Bills continue to be reviewed by the Governor, and it is possible that the Legislature will hold a session to override some of the Governor's vetoes. The Governor has until July 10th, or 45 working days after adjournment of session, to review legislation and then either sign, veto, or allow a bill to become law without her signature.

As always, please contact me if you have questions or concerns. I can be reached by phone at 586-9425, by fax at 586-9431, or by email at repbelatti@capitol.hawaii.gov.

Mahalo,

DELLA AU BELATTI, State Representative

Inside this issue:

2007 Education Initiatives	2
Funding for Schools in Our District	2
Supporting Charter Schools	3
Stevenson Student Goes to National Spelling Bee	4
Washington Middle School Wins State Math Competition	4
Advertiser Teen Editorial Board	4

Upcoming Holidays

Wednesday July 4th

Independence Day

Friday August 17th

Statehood Day

Monday September 3rd

Labor Day

Got Pig?

The year-long DLNR controlled pig hunt program in the Manoa-Tantalus area is at its six month mark. Because of recent events that highlight public safety concerns, a community meeting is being scheduled to discuss the current program, neighborhood concerns, and future plans. If you would like to receive notification of this meeting, please contact my office at **586-9425** or at repbelatti@capitol.hawaii.gov.



Education Initiatives: Top Priority for 2007 Legislature

Innovative Curriculum. “Innovation” was a buzz-word heard throughout the 2007 legislative session. As part of the Legislature’s commitment to education, and as a testament to home-grown programs that have already received national attention, the Legislature passed two bills that will cultivate advanced analytical and problem-solving skills of our students through science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education.

First, the Legislature appropriated \$1.1 million to the statewide expansion of the Project EAST program in our schools. Project EAST is a pilot program started on Maui in 2000. It integrates cutting-edge technology, such as computer-assisted drafting, geographic information systems, and computer graphic applications, into the educational curriculum. Since 2000, Project EAST has expanded to seven schools and its students have won national awards in competitions against approximately 200 schools in six other states.

Second, at the urging of the Governor, the Legislature established in Senate Bill 885, Act 111, a Science and Technology Academy Pilot Program to be administered by Kauai Community College, in partnership with the Department of Education and two Kauai public schools. The purpose of this program is to increase interest in and develop skills in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines among our public high school students.

Act 111 also creates a new program in the UH College of Engineering that will focus on setting up project-based learning programs for students in grades 4-8, and will help middle school teachers develop the skills and knowledge to implement elements of the technical STEM program in their schools. \$2.8 million has been set aside to develop this program, and nine new positions at UH have been created to implement it.

Attracting Qualified Teachers. To provide incentives for nationally certified teachers to work in difficult to fill positions, the Legislature strengthened the Teacher National Board Certification Incentives Program (House Bill 24). HB 24 establishes a \$5,000 annual bonus to these teachers who work in schools that are restructuring under the No Child Left Behind Act, have a high teacher turnover rate, are not making adequate yearly progress, or are hard-to-fill schools. \$500,000 was appropriated for fiscal year 2007-2008 for this bonus program.

Encouraging College Graduation. To encourage college attendance among underrepresented students, the Legislature strengthened the Running Start Program (House Bill 767). This bill requires the DOE to provide guidance to students to earn credit toward high school graduation for successful completion of certain UH courses. HB 767 also appropriates \$50,000 into the UH Scholarship and Assistance Special Fund for each year of the 2007-2009 fiscal biennium to provide for scholarships for underrepresented students and families with low incomes.

2007-2008 STATEWIDE BUDGET ALLOCATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

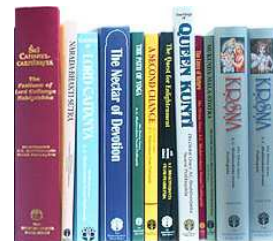
Repairs & Improvements (Includes Roofing, Air Conditioning, Painting, Plumbing, & Other Repairs & Improvements)	\$75,000,000
Electrical System Upgrades	\$25,000,000
Accessibility Improvements (Includes Design & Construction of Ramps, Elevators, & Other Corrective Measures)	\$5,000,000

DISTRICT SCHOOLS’ ALLOCATIONS

Lincoln Elementary School	
Rock Wall/Parking Lot Repairs & & Drainage Improvements	\$940,000
Queen Kaahumanu Elementary School	
Teacher Parking Lot Construction & Fencing	\$280,000
Stevenson Middle School	
Development of Master Plan for Campus Improvements	\$550,000



Supporting Hawaii's Charter Schools



Improving Charter School Governance

Charter schools in Hawaii will soon have more autonomy and greater opportunities to achieve effective operations. This year, the Legislature passed and the Governor recently signed into law Senate Bill 603, Act 115. This law gives increased authority to the Charter School Review Panel over administration and operations of the State's charter schools.

"The success of charter schools around the State has been phenomenal for many communities. I hope that through our efforts, we can continue to give teachers at these schools greater flexibility to carry out their mission, and opportunities for students to excel," states Della.

The Panel will now have the authority to approve and deny applications for new charter schools, previously a road-block to expanding charter schools in communities. The Panel will also be able to issue, revoke, and amend charters, conduct school evaluations, and place non-compliant schools on probation.

The Panel will also be responsible for appointing a Charter School Administrative Office Executive Director and staff who will be accountable to the Panel. Membership on the Panel will increase from 9 to 12, adding one representative each from UH and the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools, a person with a business or accounting background, and a person with a background in real estate or building trades.

Finally, to ensure fair and adequate funding for charter schools, Act 115 ties the charter schools' per-student funding formula to a portion of the DOE's most recently-approved budget. This will provide charter schools a stable annual budget and give them greater opportunity to financially plan for the future.

Adequate Funding for Charter Schools

In addition to this year's important Charter School Governance bill, the Legislature provided for charter schools in House Bill 500. First, \$51,635,990 in general funds for each year of the 2007-2009 fiscal biennium was appropriated for charter school operations.

Second, HB 500 mandates that representatives from the Office of the Governor, the Charter School Administrative Office, and the Board of Education hold work sessions and meetings that are open to the public for developing a charter schools basic funding formula at a level that is comparable to funding for regular public schools.

HB 500 also provides that funding for charter school facilities be addressed, but handled separately from the basic funding formula, and that the differences between conversion and start-up charter schools be recognized.

Charter School Moving to Makiki District

Hālau Kū Māna, a cultural, community, and environmentally-based public charter school plans to move into its new home in Makiki Valley in June of this year. Keola Nakanishi, Director of Hālau Kū Māna, said the school has recently acquired a 30-year lease in Makiki Valley with the help of the state. The school will be located just below the Hawaii Nature Center on Makiki Heights Drive.

Director Nakanishi has been invited to a community meeting to make a presentation on the school and its long-term plans. The meeting is being planned for late July and is being sponsored by Rep. Belatti and Senator Carol Fukunaga. All residents of District 25 are welcome to attend. Please contact my office at 586-9425 or at repbelatti@capitol.hawaii.gov if you would like to be notified of the meeting.

Stevenson Student Competes in National Spelling Bee

At the 2007 Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington D.C., Andrew Zhou, a talented eighth grader at Robert Louis Stevenson Middle School represented Hawaii.

Facing a field of tough competitors from around the nation, Andrew passed round after round and nearly made the semi-finals. Quatenus, defined as "in the capacity of," finally caused him trouble and ended his bid for the national award.

Congratulations Andrew! We look forward to your future accomplishments as you continue on with high school.



Della, Mayor Mufi Hannemann, and Speaker Calvin Say pose for a photo with members of the 2006-2007 Honolulu Advertiser Teen Editorial Board.

At their last meeting of the year, Della spoke with the teen board members about civic engagement and maintaining one's values and integrity throughout the political process.

Students are chosen each year from schools around the island to provide fresh perspectives on major issues affecting the community. To apply for the Board, send an email with your name, address, phone number, age, and school, and tell the Advertiser why you would like to be a participant. You can send your email to editorial assistant Stacy Berry at sberry@honoluluadvertiser.com.

Washington Middle School Math Team Wins State MathCounts Championship



Della and Senator Carol Fukunaga present awards to members of the State Mathcounts Championship Team.

Washington Middle School students won first place in the 2007 MathCounts state competition on March 10th, beating Iolani (2nd), Punahou (3rd), Waiakea Intermediate (4th), Miliani Middle (5th), and Parker School (6th).

Team members Richard Chang, Julia Chen, Jonathan Huang and Naoki Shigeta, worked hard with coaches Cynthia Ching and Lance Iida to surpass Iolani and Punahou to take first place. Chang (1st) and Shigeta (5th) were two of the highest individual scorers, both of whom went on to represent Hawaii in the MathCounts National Championship in Fort Worth, Texas in May 2007.

Congratulations to the entire team and their coaches who worked so hard to make their success a reality, and best of luck to them again next year.